

2026 FEBRUARY - OCTOBER

LIVING IN SAṂSĀRA

for resilience, courage, & compassion grounded in the inner-journey

**** revised in light of January events ****

DATES 2026 – OCCASIONAL THURSDAYS*
(BEGINNING FEBRUARY 5TH)

TIME 7:00-8:15 PM CENTRAL TIME (USA)

ONLINE VIA ZOOM

Saṁsāra (wandering, recycling) describes the worlds in which we live, act, and react. This versatile concept and metaphor helps us understand these worlds and how we journey through them. In this series we will consider the outer saṁsāras such as capitalist society, deteriorating democracy, political violence, and climate breakdown, and networks of solidarity, community cohesiveness, and ecosystem renewal; and the inner saṁsāras of our reactions, fears, denials, anger, and anguish, and our loves, life lessons, and honesty. How these outer and inner saṁsāras interact, provoke, and reinforce each other will be central to this monthly series.

These days many of the outer saṁsāras are increasingly tumultuous, frightening, and unjust. They are being escalated by a corrupt, immoral, cruel regime almost totally at odds with Buddhist values. These can be especially troubling and overwhelming when we view them from within isolated individual selves. The ethical teachings of Buddhism offer perspectives on responding wisely and compassionately within that predicament. Buddhism also offers rich tools for understanding how we make matters worse through our naïve ego habits, which are also saṁsāras. The Middle Way is the path for navigating all the saṁsāras peacefully, compassionately, and wisely.

For those of us who seek guidance in how we might respond to these threats, challenges, and opportunities, Sanghas that address such circumstances honestly and support each other in responding mindfully, compassionately, and skillfully are a vital need. If you feel such fears,

* Most months will be the 2nd Thursday of the; otherwise, the 1st or 3rd. Apologies for the scheduling awkwardness. Dates will be announced a month or two in advance.

challenges, and needs, this series and the sangha that meets here aspire to provide such support.

Developing[†] Buddha-Dhamma perspectives that help us come to terms with our inner turmoils as we address the outer turmoils in our society does not support Buddhist escapism and avoidance of the realities in which we live, both inner and social. Let our emphasis, here, be moral and spiritual more than political or economic. While the later must be considered, and not ignored, we will do so using ethical and Dhammic frameworks. We won't shy away from naming the racism, cruelty, militarization, and other such perversions of the commons where they occur, and the specific evils, horrors, and cruelties of the racist Trump regime. We may also name the stresses and pressures the agents of the regime are under. Activist responses are best discussed within local activist sanghas. This series will support that by grounding our choices and response in Buddhist teachings, ethics, and practice.

To illustrate, listen to a [recent Ezra Klein interview with Caitlin Dickerson, an Atlantic journalist](#) who covers immigration. These are honest, thoughtful journalists who follow standards of honesty and competence (something largely absent in the regime). They work for venerable outfits that once defined the mainstream before everything was scrambled by rightwing propaganda and power grabs. They are not lefties or radicals, no matter what the likes of Fox might say. To absorb the "terrible knowledge" they explore one requires a grounding in Dhamma practice. This series aims to support that; not convince you that resistance is required, which is assumed to be shared understanding.

The country is being run by very damaged people, for whom compassion is warranted, as well as resistance. Such dishonest, corrupt actors also deserve being removed nonviolently and jailed. A Middle Way that combines both can be found within Buddhist teaching, just as Dr King and his colleagues found a nonviolent path for social justice within their Biblical tradition and Dr Ambedkar did with his dalit compatriots in India.

To participate in this class requires judicious absorbing of responsible journalism, which means not inundating and overwhelming oneself. Two or three good articles or podcasts a week are sufficient. I caution you from turning to the highly filtered news on corporate TV.

Lastly, a lesson I am digesting is that the time is past for bashing democrats and elite liberal institutions such as Harvard and the NY Times. Right now, with so much under threat, they are allies in preventing things from getting desperately worse. This isn't a time for political correctness or cancel culture. It's a time for respecting diversity in order to work together, including with everyone's imperfections, fears, and hangups.

How each of us acts is a matter of personal conscience and discernment, in consultation with partners, family, community, and sanghas. This series is for those who have determined that failure to resist allows the shredding of what democracy and scraps of public decency remain. I will forthrightly argue that the Buddhist path is one of courage, spiritually and ethically. We

[†] This and following 8 paragraphs are new additions.

have the creativity and wisdom to thoughtfully discover the necessary skillful means, in cooperation with people of goodwill and integrity.

I hope this series will help participants think through these dilemmas as many things continue to get worse, as exemplified by the extrajudicial murders of Renee Good and Alex Petri, the arrests of children and invasion of schools, and the subsequent lies and escalation of the bad-faith actors of the Trump regime. Sadly, many more atrocities are being perpetrated in Minneapolis and elsewhere.

This series is for fostering compassion for each other, the direct victims of Trump's paramilitary thugs, and the misguided people caught up in the whole evil business. Consider a recent example of this is [Kaira Jewel Lingo's Love Letter to an ICE Agent](#).

The purpose of this series is more practical than theoretical or ideological, that is, to cultivate courage and resilience in ourselves and our communities. We will explore the power of the Middle Way to navigate the turbulence inner and outer. The teachings provide models for Dhammic living that we can emulate, especially when business and political leaders are going in other directions. Here is where we have choice and freedom, if we only see it regularly and in many situations.

In each meeting Santikaro will reflect on such teachings drawn from original Buddha-Dhamma. Everyone is then invited to bring constructive perspectives, emotional observations, and spiritually grounded reflections to the conversation. This may be leavened by what we have learned from later Buddhist developments, psychology, sociology, critical gender & race studies, and history learned since the original discourses were recorded. Let us share our wisdom and compassion skillfully.

These meetings won't assume specific forms of activism. Rather, in aims to support us in making wise choices in how we take responsibility for the saṃsāras in which we live. Politics will not be ignored, while partisan politics and finger-pointing will not be encouraged. Rather than doom & gloom, sober, realistic hope will be encouraged. We don't know how bad things will get, so let's not jump to conclusions. Nor should we be overly influenced by the divisive fear-mongering of our corrupt two-party system, the biases of for-profit media, and the mendaciousness of well-paid operatives. Yet, many things could get worse than they are already are, so let's be spiritually fortified and able to serve the greater good.

Registration: Fill out [this on-line form](#) and send [\\$100 registration fee following the information here](#). This fee is to encourage commitment to full participation. Nobody will be refused because of inability to pay this fee. Please email us [if you cannot afford the fee](#) so that we can make other arrangements.

Once you have registered, you'll receive an email giving access to the **course's [Home Page](#)** (a Google Doc), which will be the on-line hub for information concerning this course, including the Zoom link, schedule, and links to recordings.

Recordings & Resources: If you must miss a meeting, please listen to the recordings that will be posted on the course's [Home Page](#). Santikaro will share articles, links, and recordings through the course's [Home Page](#).

Reciprocal support: The Buddha's teachings, sanghas of training and practice, places of practice, and practice resources involve the hard work of many people, technical skills, financial generosity, and an overall spirit of reciprocal service. As a participant in this course, in addition to the registration payment, we ask you to support our work in ways suitable to your means and abilities. The kindness of others has made this course possible; your help insures that such activities continue. Please [visit our dāna page on a regular basis](#).

Occasional retreats: If a retreat coincides with one of our meetings, Santikaro will reschedule an alternative date for that meeting.

Any questions? Please [email Santikaro](#).

Revised January 30, 2026